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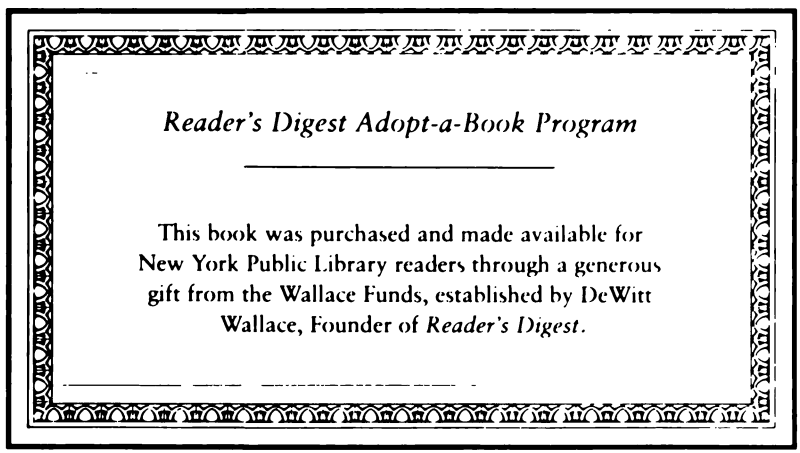
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The Last Confessions of Marie Bashkirtseff



THE LAST PHOTOGRAPH OF MARIE BASHKIRTSEFF.

The Last Confessions of Marie Bashkirtseff and Her Correspondence with Guy de Maupassant

With a Foreword by

Jeannette L. Gilder



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FOREWORD.

As it was through my instrumentality that Marie Bashkirtseff was introduced to the American public, it is not, perhaps, unnatural that I should be asked to write a few words of introduction to this volume of her "Confessions."

There have been other women who have written as intimately of themselves as Marie Bashkirtseff, notably Sonya Kovalevsky, but none whose confessions have been read to the same extent, or who have made the same impression. It is not only for her frankness that Marie Bashkirtseff's name has become a household word, but for the circumstances that surrounded her life. In her short story

romance and pathos were equally blended. The story of her precocity, her talents, her early death, caught the public attention and touched the public heart.

The first English edition of the Journal of this young artist was published in 1889. I asked Mrs. Serrano to make this translation and, with some difficulty, induced Cassell & Company to publish it. The head of the American house, to whom I took the translator's manuscript, was very doubtful of the book's success, but I was confident of it and he yielded to my persuasion. When the sales ran up to a quarter of a million copies within a few months, there was one prophet who was not without honour in her own country. The newspapers, the reviews, the magazines, all discussed the book at length. No writer considered himself too great a man to discuss this remarkable Russian girl. Gladstone took pages of the Nineteenth Century

in which to praise the Journal, while writers in the Century Magazine and the Atlantic hailed it as something unique in literature.

In this new volume of Marie Bashkirtseff's "Confessions" there is no falling off in interest. The entries in this Journal have all of her characteristics. Perhaps the most striking pages of the book are those devoted to the letters that passed between Marie and Guy de Maupassant. She had never seen the novelist nor had he ever seen her. She only knew him by his books; a knowledge, one would think, that scarcely invited the confidence of a young girl.

This young girl, however, was exceptional. The very fact that Guy de Maupassant was just what he was excited her interest, an interest altogether intellectual. She wanted to write to him and to receive his letters, just as a naturalist wants to catch a new

and strange insect in his net. She felt a scientific kind of interest in this new specimen. Her first letter to him was short, but it must have piqued his curiosity. "I only know," she wrote, "that you are young, and that you are unmarried, two essential points. But I warn you that I am charming; this sweet thought will encourage you to reply." Maupassant's reply showed that he wished to know more of his fair correspondent. She will tell him nothing. So he tries to "force her hand" by making believe that he thinks her a man or a plain old woman. She only humors the guess and plays with him.

"You may," he writes, "be a young woman of literary society, and hard and dry as a mattrass." Again, "Are you worldly or sentimental? or simply romantic? or, again, merely a woman who is bored and wants distraction?" She only chaffs him in her reply. What Maupassant says

about himself is interesting, and undoubtedly true :—

"I take everything with indifference, and I pass two-thirds of my time in profound boredom. I occupy the third third in writing lines that I sell as dear as possible, distressing myself at being obliged to play this abominable part which has given me the honour of being distinguished—morally—by you."

All this must have been very entertaining to Marie. But what is more, it gave her the excitement that she craved and without which she was unhappy. Of course she was abnormal. Neither mind nor body were in a natural condition. She could not have lived. You feel that in her first letters. Girls such as she was never become old women. If she had not written about herself and indited epistles to people whom she had never seen, she would probably have been a victim of morphine.

Such a nature as hers was bound to be the slave of habit. She had the pen habit, and had to write to relieve herself—in her Journal, in letters to strangers, it mattered little where, so long as she could talk about herself, her appearance, her emotions, love —which she never felt,—anything, so that she might be always in the glare of the lime-light.

Her death was pathetic, but her life was pathos itself.

JEANNETTE L. GILDER.

INTRODUCTION

If the cruel hand of death stayed Marie Bashkirtseff's advance from fame to greatness, the time when she can be lightly forgotten is not yet. History may only know her as a footnote in the record of literature and art, but for us, her contemporaries, the memory of this pathetic figure will be cherished for itself until the generation to which we belong, and of which she was a symptom, in its strength and weakness, has made way for the children of the new century. The sensation of twelve years ago, when the first diaries were published, can hardly be repeated; and yet the unique interest which writers, artists, psychologists, at least one great statesman, then hastened to acknowledge, exists unimpaired in the

following pages. Nothing had been seen like these self-revelations before; though every one knows the trick of realism now nothing has been seen like them in the interval. Most readers were a little, or more than a little, shocked by this laying bare of a girl's heart. "I tell all, yes, all" —that appeared too terrible a novelty to be quite the thing in respectable society. That, outraged conventions notwithstanding, the singular soul-history took the world by storm has happily not sufficed to evoke an imitation crop of naked confidences. Marie Bashkirtseff has found no imitators, in the main because such a show of devouring vanity and ambition would seem revolting in any grown adult; and this particular conjunction of experience, talent, and persistent energy is very rare indeed among the young. It was death, the unanswerable fact, that added the final seal of tragic truth even to the wildest of Marie's pages.

MARIE BASHKIRTSEFF

Suppose I were to die quite suddenly. . . . Soon nothing would remain of me—nothing, nothing! It is this which has always terrified me. To live, to have so much ambition, to suffer, weep, struggle—and then oblivion! . . . Oblivion . . . as if I had never been. Should I not live long enough to become famous, this Journal will be of interest to naturalists; for the life of a woman must always be curious, told thus day by day, without any attempt at posing, as if no one in the world would ever read it, yet written with the intention of being read; for I feel quite sure the reader will find me sympathetic.[1]

This pitiful plea came home to the mind of the generous reader, as the later passages of the present diaries, which cover three-quarters of the last year of her life, will do.

I am thinner by half. . . . I begin to have talent and I see myself wither. . . . Is it not this terror of the end, when we are no more, that urges men to leave something behind them?

Four months later the flickering light went out. Even if the talent were less

[1] *The Journal of Marie Bashkirtseff*, translated, with Indroduction, by Mathilde Blind, 1889, p. 1.

conspicuous, one would reflect that few writers care to give their life in proof of their sincerity. And, after all, the world needs and values sincerity more than talent. Within a year, when the painter would still have been a mere girl of twenty-five, France had hung one of her pictures among the treasures of the Luxembourg. To a much larger, a world-wide, circle of men and women, the journals came to justify the prophecy of the Russian fortune-teller: "Your daughter will be a star." It was the woman rather than the artist who appealed to Gladstone, Lombroso, Coppée; and it is the woman who still appeals to us.

And in particular the Russian woman "The Slav character"—as she herself said in telling the story of an old governess—"the Slav character, inoculated with French civilisation and romantic literature, is a curious product." We all know more to-

day, and we want to know more still, of the Slav character. Tolstoy, Turgueneff, Stepniak, Sonya Kovalevsky, Helena Blavatsky, Marie Bashkirtseff—to what strange under-worlds of human passion these names give us the keys! That the evolution of these meteoric Russians, the outer influences that helped to mould them, are easily understood should not lead to their being overlooked. Like those others, Marie Bashkirtseff was a product of a thwarted society. We recall the somewhat similar and even more tragic case of Sonya Kovalevsky, who, after carrying off, as a mathematician, the highest European honours, died prematurely of overwork and heart-hunger. Russia, which has given birth to so many brilliant women, cannot yet give them a home; they flash across the intellectual horizon and go out suddenly, orphans in exile. Marie Bashkirtseff never suffered bodily hunger, but

she never enjoyed the spiritual food of a normal, stable home life. Born of noble parentage, near Poltava in Little Russia, in the winter of 1860, she was an infant when the home was broken up; and it was not till she was sixteen years old that her parents met again. In the meantime Mme. Bashkirtseff, with her boy and girl, her parents, a sister, Marie's cousin Dina (the "long-suffering Cinderella of her caprices" who is often mentioned in the following journal), attended by a little retinue of teachers and servants, had wandered over half of Europe, leaving Baden on the outbreak of the Franco-German war for Geneva, and moving thence to Nice. Here Marie set herself seriously to the study of English, Italian, and German, Latin and Greek, drawing and music; here also (being now of the mature age of thirteen) she fell desperately in love with a certain outrageous British nobleman, to

whom, however, she never had an opportunity of saying so much as "Good morning." In Rome she carried on a more serious flirtation with the nephew of a great Cardinal, until the intervention of the Holy Father himself was invoked, and the offending Pietro was packed off to a convent. In Florence, Rome, and Berlin, and later in Madrid, Marie's art studies made rapid progress. After a brief visit to Russia and her father, on a fruitless mission of conciliation, she returned to France to make Paris her home and art her absolute mistress (a beautiful voice had already given way to chronic laryngitis). The Barbazon influence was in full flood; Marie Bashkirtseff brought the genius of Russia to this mature revolt against dead classicism; and not only the realism but the fiery energy of the Slavic character. Her heart-hunger, the alternations of passion and vain ambition, with

inertia and hopelessness, the conflict of high ideals and petty ambitions, she revealed in the cold pages of her "brain's novel," as she called her journal, and there only. That she was killing herself in the race for fame—working at the studio morning and afternoon, writing and modelling at night at home, and in the intervals rushing about to social functions—could not be concealed from sympathetic eyes. Perhaps the best portrait of her at this period is contained in the following lines by a fellow-student, Marion Hepworth Dixon.[1]

> This musician—for Marie Bashkirtseff could hold a room spellbound with her phrasing of Chopin—this musician, sculptor, painter, writer, had none of the airs and graces of a merely clever woman. A simplicity, mingled with a quaint and delightful whimsicality, were markedly hers. . . . She was womanish in her wit, her refinement,

[1] "A Personal Reminiscence," *Fortnightly Review*, February, 1890.

her coquetry; womanish in her pruderies, in her audacities, her chatter, her silences, in her gaiety, and more than all in her still more abundant sadness. Above the height of the average Frenchwoman, Marie Bashkirtseff bore that something ethereal and spiritual in her face which seems the birthright of those who die young. An exquisitely moulded figure, the arm and hand of a statue, the foot of a Spaniard, the blonde hair and penetrating eye of the Northerner, all these things did not constitute in Marie Bashkirtseff what is called in every-day parlance "a pretty woman." That she had a bewitching pallor—an opaqueness of skin-tone peculiar to the North, a grace, a distinction, a fascination, a power which was felt in her very gentleness, all these things must be admitted by those who had the privilege of knowing her. . . . In her very sociability there was a kind of aloofness of detachment which had little to do with the malady she so constantly deplored. At the age of twenty Marie Bashkirtseff was already slightly deaf. And this was her crowning grief. . . . With a fine scorn, in real life, for bourgeois pretensions, middle-class prejudices, she could be kind, helpful, almost tender with the ignorant and ill-advised. I have seen her aiding the least promising newcomer in the *atelier* Julien (the visiting master, the Adonis of the studio, M. Tony Robert Fleury —already a middle-aged Adonis in 1880—was

sometimes unnecessarily severe with beginners), giving her time when she had already begun to guess that her working days were numbered. And how she worked! To labour was a passion with her; to toil at whatever she took in hand a kind of ferocious joy. . . . Closed windows, a fierce charcoal stove, the indescribable smell of oil paints, turpentine, rags, and at luncheon time of scraps of eatables, could hardly have conduced to the health of the strongest; yet I cannot recall one word of complaint that ever fell from Marie Bashkirtseff.

Readers of the correspondence with Guy de Maupassant, now first fully published, will not fail to distinguish clearly between the precocious but pure-minded, if morbid, Russian and the really decadent Frenchman, the feverishly active, ambitious, and adventurous girl, and the man for whom "everything is divided into boredom, farce, and misery," everything is sunk in an utter weariness which she cannot understand. She is indeed in search of new sensations; yet she can write—

MARIE BASHKIRTSEFF

Art just consists in making us swallow the commonplace by charming us eternally, as Nature does with her everlasting sun, and her olden earth, and her men built all on the same pattern.

To make clear this distinction between the abnormal and the degenerate is perhaps the most valuable point, as the pretty play of wit in the letters is the most interesting thing, in this little volume.

Miss Hepworth Dixon's touching tribute serves also to correct a false impression that might be gained from a glance at the diaries and letters. Marie Bashkirtseff was no mere society idler pining for the excitement of a love affair. She was a devoted artist who sacrificed everything, though not without many a qualm, to her art. In these pages we see the three-cornered struggle, now against love, now against ambition, now against surrounding philistinism. The battle is at its height; it is the last year of a doomed life. For five

years she has been labouring with her brushes, at first under the Julian and the Fleury who are, here again, the subjects of her tortured admiration, finding her material mainly in the streets of Paris, but also drawing upon her knowledge of the classics and her memories of Italy and Spain. "The Umbrella" (1882), "Jean et Jacques" and "Le Meeting" (1883) and "Spring" (1884) revealed an impressionist gift of high quality; and her landscape work showed as much imagination and poetic sense as her portraits did ability of catching the intangible expressions of human character. "But," as Miss Mathilde Blind also testified, "we do not realise Marie Bashkirtseff's astonishing energy, power of work, and devotion to her art till we have seen the quantity of sketches, designs, and studies from life which she managed to produce between the ages of seventeen and twenty-four." These were carefully

stored up by Mme. Bashkirtseff, in the house where her daughter spent the two or three last years of her life "in a kind of artistic delirium, laying in a picture, modelling in wet clay, improvising wondrous tunes, studying Homer, Livy, and Dante, stretching the hours into days by the number of sensations she managed to cram them with. In the following pages we get glimpses of this varied but always feverish labour. It is, however, the woman rather than the artist who seizes and holds us—the woman writhing in the grip of elemental desires, even at the very door of death; the woman demanding as the proper food of genius "all music, incense, flowers"; praying God to make her "a veritable star"; shivering at the thought of ridicule; comparing herself in her superstitions with Napoleon and Cæsar, in her varied talent with the Queen of Roumania; jealously raving against a rival student; the silly

girl who sentimentalises over a grand duke, and complains that she gets no credit for certain dress fashions she has suggested.

Could such an abnormal being love? Miss Blind has given us a striking little picture which we may be allowed to quote here: "Marie was much occupied with her appearance, fond of dress, and had more than the ordinary share of a woman's love of attracting admiration. She had a finely developed figure of middle height, hair of a golden red, the brilliant complexion that usually accompanies a tendency to consumption, and a face which, without being regularly handsome, captivated you by the fire and energy of its expression. Photography could never do her justice. Her real spell lay in the intense vitality which shone out of her deep grey eyes." It is certain she could not love for love's sake alone. "I adore no one," she says in this journal, "but the lamp of my imagination

is lit." In these pages, again, the names of Bastien-Lepage and of Marie Bashkirtseff are often brought together. At first it is a case of "to-day he pleases me, . . . to-morrow it has passed"; and "if Bastien-Lepage marries, it will only be a disappointment of the imagination." But later, after the return of Bastien-Lepage from Algiers in the summer of 1884, a warmer comradeship grew up and brightened the last days of the two stricken artists. In mid-October neither of them could walk; but Bastien was carried by his brother to the room where she lay on a sofa, dressed—fond creature!—in white silk and fine lace. "Ah! if I could paint!" cried her stricken friend as he looked at her.

On 31st October 1884 Marie died; and Bastien-Lepage survived scarcely six weeks longer.

G. H. PERRIS.

THE DIARY

6th October 1883.

I HAVE just written this to Tony Robert-Fleury:—

"DEAR MASTER—I ought to be only too happy about what you have said of the picture, and yet I am almost dissatisfied! But pray do not take what I am going to tell you for an affectation of modesty. I am absolutely sincere; and I write you so that you may know that I deserve absolute frankness, that I judge myself sanely, and that I can hear cruel truths, because I have the conviction that one day I shall be able to hear agreeable ones. For the rest your delicacy, the delicacy of the truly great artist, will make you understand my scruples when I find myself face to face



"M. TONY ROBERT-FLEURY."

with my self-respect. Should I esteem myself more? Yes, if your judgment is strictly just. You said 'Good,' and for certain parts 'Very good.' Those are very big words. Good by comparison with whom? Good with regard to what circumstance? I do not want a relative 'good'; that means nothing. If you saw this picture at the Salon as the work of an unknown youth, would you only say that it is passable?

"As to this picture, perhaps you will not retract, but in future do not be benevolent! I beg it of your friendship for your very proud pupil.

"MARIE BASHKIRTSEFF."

What will Fleury say? If my picture is good I shall thank God for it. The blessing of the old Archimandrite of St. Petersburg, who has sent me an image of the Virgin, has brought me good luck.

Robert-Fleury and others might say "It is perfect," only that would not make me happy, for I do not find that this is my utmost.

Sunday, 7th October 1883.

I have seen the new moon with the left eye, and am sad! In truth, Miss, how dare you confess to such dull superstitions? Why dull? Napoleon and Cæsar were superstitious, only to mention the two most illustrious. St. A—— and the princess dined here, and B——,[1] who posed all day.

Monday, 8th October 1883.

Julian finds the portrait of B—— very clever. "It is very good for every one else, but since your ideal is Bastien-Lepage, think of the perfection which he gives to a piece; strain all your faculties, and get an extraordinary result; otherwise it would be a pity. Let it rest, and next spring give

[1] Prince Bojidar Karageorgevitch of Servia.

yourself the pleasure of executing certain parts in such a fashion that there shall be nothing more to say." He is nearly as exacting as I am, this Julian!

Robert-Fleury has come; B—— remains, and we all dine together. Julian tells me that the grandfather of Bastien-Lepage has just died. It is for the portrait of this grandfather that he obtained his medal in 1874, a *début* which made a stir.

Thursday, 11th October 1883.

Yesterday we went to see the G——s, who want me to marry A——. They have lost the hope of getting me to make the happiness of a charming little Frenchman, then go for a foreign prince.

"But marry, become a lover, and you will paint no more."

The Queen of Roumania paints and writes.

I even told them details of the works of

the Queen; it was the only way of making them believe in the painter's devotion. They are men of the world. Ah! what misery! Am I, then, so much superior to all these people? No matter. They worry me with these marriages. If Bastien-Lepage marries, it will only be a *disappointment of the imagination.* Why does one please rather those to whom one is indifferent than those one loves? Because one laughs at the indifferents, while with the others one becomes timid, one loses that assured air which is as the health and youth of one's being. Then, one pleases nearly always by accident, when one does not think of it.

I am quite determined to be very firm, not to go on any longer as at present. Very often it happens to me not to utter, from delicacy, a reply that comes to my lips. It seems to me, except at least in urgent cases, that one ought always to avoid

everything that may appear the least bit disagreeable, and even to contradict positively appears to me a lack of politeness—of that rare politeness which sometimes leads us to let lame things pass and not refute them. These adorable sentiments would pass if there were at least thirty of us to practise them; but, among the people I see, few think as I do. If I were exquisitely kind I should pass for a person one could sit upon.

For some time I have seen that it is absolutely necessary to speak of what one knows, to quote authors, to make incursions into the domain of science. To be to a certain extent instructed seemed to me so natural that I should not speak of it.

Why have I written all this?

13th and 14th October 1883.

Busy day; leave for Jouy at 7 o'clock in the morning. Walk in the wood, re-

touch the portrait of Louis, conversation, croquet. The forest of Meudon is ravishing under this sun, that gilds it through the mist. Nature is indeed beautiful.

I come in to dress; there is a little dinner this evening. I amuse myself in my hair-dressing. Instead of disordering it I leave the forehead frankly uncovered. Amid all these carefully dressed heads, it is a charming novelty. The hair twisted on top of the head and spreading naturally and this magnificent brow, of which I did not suspect either the beauty or the nobleness, change me altogether. I become of an imposing candour; it seems to me that I am pontifical, or that I am descending from a throne. This gives a sweet gentleness to the bearing, an air of calm and strength. And this forehead, always hidden, is of an infantine purity; I am fifteen years old.

This evening, when there was no one in-

teresting to me, I was of a radiant freshness. Still I know by experience that one is pretty *when one wishes it.* I lower myself to play cards; they are lucky. Mme. G—— played bezique with S—— G——, piquet with the princess; the others bored themselves as they could. As for me I went from group to group. . . . It is necessary that I should have a name to grind in this immense mill, my head.

Tuesday, 16th October 1883.

I have just re-read inadvertently some pages of my life in 1880, and I find myself much happier now. It is quite astonishing, by comparison, and even without comparison. I have no care; I am tranquil. Then how I wept daily, how I worried myself! and with good reason. Now I see all that from a higher place, much higher; our situation is better. Oh, yes. I am well now, and I thank God for it.

Wednesday, 17th October 1883.

To-day I commence the model of my statue. I work now like a primitive; I am forced to invent the means. What I fear is to fall ill—I cannot breathe; I do not feel strong, and I am growing thin. At last this terrible malady is certain. *I am consumptive.* I would that all this were imaginary, but, alas! It would be necessary to go south. . . . Ah, how worrying it all is!

I have passed two frightful hours without any fresh cause. Any one condemned to death would feel this. They had only lit one lamp in the salon. Mamma worked, and Dina yawned, while my aunt from time to time crossed the room. These three women exchanged some words in a low voice. It was quite simple, and it seemed to me lugubrious. I feel myself in the depth of Russia, in the country, far from Paris, as if some horrible misfortune were



M. JULES BASTIEN-LEPAGE.

coming. I read with a very natural air, and thought of death. Ah, well! you will never catch me complaining of these psychological sadnesses, or even of other misfortunes.

At last! I await something fearful, I know not what. Anything may happen. I am going to pray.

20th October 1883.

If I were sixteen years old they might say this was the first melancholy of a girl. It is not that. I am as if my lot had been thrown.

And, in this connection, pray, dear and amiable Frenchmen, never treat me as Oriental, superstitious, Slav, and all that you generally say when strangers are not like yourselves. If I speak of "bad luck" and other fantasies, it is because that appears to me picturesque or droll. And I might be born at Montmartre, and I might

call myself Marie Durand or Irma Pochard, and it would be the same thing.

It is possible my French is not French; if I took heed I could write very correctly; but it seems to me that certain incoherent thoughts require a perfect artlessness of expression.

But I am far from my black sadness. . . . It is evident that if I were cured I should be mad with joy. But it is not from being ill that I suffer; I am resigned to this misfortune. . . . Oh, my God! Because I am resigned, because I accept life with this immense black burden, do not aggravate it! Be pitiful!

24th October 1883.

All is imagination with me. I see Bastien-Lepage, and I believe he pleases me (on the last visit); on the morrow it has passed. A few days after I say to myself: "Hold! And Bastien-Lepage, I think no more of him, then?" No more at all!

But if I thought no more of him, of whom should I think? For, I tell you this, I must always have something, no matter what, for the stories that I tell myself in a whisper to send myself to sleep at night. It has no other importance, and is not like some one who is obtrusive—like real, love, in fine.

4th November 1883.

There is in Paris a string of Grand Dukes and Grand Duchesses. There were six of them at this morning's mass. The Grand Dukes Vladimir, Alexis, Serge, and Paul—if with these four superb brothers our Emperor does not know how to triumph over Nihilism! . . . It is Alexis, above all, who is handsome. Tall, strong, harmonious, with flaxen hair, the eyes of an honest man, a beautiful light beard naturally curled, and in all his figure something easy, tranquil, and sympathetic. I should say *honest man* if that accorded with the figure of a

Homeric hero and an absolutely imperial air.

Leaving the church we called at the G——s. With G—— it is funny; it seems to me that I please him. . . . Perhaps he loves me in his fashion? Charming boy, but what should I do with him? And I do not love him, and I have not even the desire to embrace him. One shuts one's eyes and asks oneself: "Let me see, shall I embrace M. So-and-So?" Ah, well! he says nothing to me—neither he nor the others.

However, I should like to be very coquettish with him. But I am too loyal. I am persuaded that it would be easy for me to draw his love, and then? That would give him too much disappointment.

To return to the Grand Duke. It seemed to me that he looked at me. Oh! don't exclaim! I have re-read my horoscope by Edmond. It promises me a thou-

sand torments, but whatever I do, whatever happens, though there be desperate moments, I shall succeed at length.

5th November 1883.

Ever since I dressed myself in Paris I have struggled against the stupid and uncouth fashions. Five years ago I asked for draperies and corsages gathered [*froncés*], open at the neck [*débraillés*], mythological, or Louis XV., antique skirts, Jewish robes. I passed as very eccentric, but, thanks to working for hours at Laferriere's, Worth's, Doucet's, the fashion has taken; for two years one has seen only *negligée* draperies, frills, fichus, sashes. The fashions most run after at Doucet's are of my invention. And none of them bear my name!

Tuesday, 6th November 1883.

Emile Bastien has just told me that his brother is sick at not having painted enough this year. Like me, then. I showed him

my urchins,[1] and I dare scarcely write what he said of it. It is a medal for certain. Many artists in great positions and in the first rank would not do as much. It will never be suspected that it is the work of a girl; it is that of some one who *thinks*, who observes, who loves nature. . . . He did not expect as much.

"But take care; you are going to pass a critical moment, you will be in a dangerous position. This picture will have a great success. You will have your head turned. That will be a pity."

[1] "A really fine picture, 'Le Meeting,'" says Miss Blind, "was begun in April 1883. The title was a stroke of wit when applied to half a dozen lads discussing the use to which a piece of string is to be applied with the excitement of politicians over a question of State. . . . A set of ugly, unwashed, badly clothed ragamuffins. Yet how interesting, how full of life and character they are! Though grey and sombre in colour, this picture is harmonious, nay, even brilliant, in tone. A memorable performance for a girl of twenty two, who had only started in her artistic career five years previously." It was exhibited in the Salon of 1884, and attracted wide attention.



MARIE BASHKIRTSEFF'S STUDIO HUNG WITH HER OWN PAINTINGS.

At that I burst out laughing, saying that my ambition is such that I should want, to be intoxicated, things quite too enormous.

Friday, 16th November.

I am at Jouy, staying with Marshal Canrobert to do landscape. And it rains, and it is so cold that I sat with Claire huddled over the fire, after having tried to get out.

Now, I have here a study on Chopin, Liszt, Paganini—artists with hands kissed by duchesses, grand seigneurs, artist-gods! Wagner was one of them. Then, my little one, you are sensible only of these mundane, noisy, and outward glories? No! But I demand that genius should be accompanied by them. Genius ought to enjoy all music, all incense, all flowers. Life, enriched with so much adoration, takes in my eyes its true aspect.

Ah! my God! Let me be independent, let me work, make of me a veritable star?

Tuesday, 20th November 1883.

I am going to see this great canary that is offered to me. It bores me, this *aurea mediocritas*. He is as good as possible, in fact the best of his kind ; he has even some heart, I believe. In fact . . . But that is not for me. And I add : " Unfortunately."

Oh ! to be stupid ! To be beautiful and stupid ! That is what I would wish for my daughter—beautiful and stupid, and with some principles, so as not to be lost.

I should like to know whether this Journal gives an idea of a really superior creature, who assumes in the world an amiable and patronising air and suffers the fooleries which she is obliged to listen to.

? ? ?

I seek a comparison between the men who do not exist and the others. Two bottles similar to the eye, one holds them in the palm of the hand ; the one is heavy and the other light, empty. It is the sur-

prise which the hand, not expecting the difference of weight, experiences.

26th November 1883.

You do not know one thing! I am sensible of beginning to take myself seriously, and my conduct is like that of one who has genius. I am artlessly proud, and calm as power, and indifferent as a superior spirit. I speak to people with a tranquil air, and seem to say: "If you wish to come, come . . . not too near!" . . . As for me, my preoccupations keep me on the heights. . . . I mock myself, at bottom, you know. Only, I make pretence of believing that it has happened. Sometimes I feel myself living as I picture men of genius living.

Wednesday, 28th November.

Julian says that Breslau,[1] who called to

[1] "One of her fellow-students, the most gifted of them, a young Swiss lady called Breslau, who, living plainly and laboriously in true art student fashion, ap-

see him, spoke to him of me. What care I shall take with this picture! Art and glory! To be famous! . . . No logic of events, no preparation, nothing could blunt the stroke of mad joy if I triumph—greatly.

To triumph on the grand scale: do not suppose I dream of it next year, or even the next, but later; it would be so maddening that I do not want to think of it. It is impossible; it would be too much. And then . . . I should be my own Jules Bastien-Lepage.

Sunday, 2nd December 1883.

Mme. Bertaux came on Thursday, and this afternoon I go to the meeting of the Women Painters and Sculptors—it is about our approaching Exhibition.

peared to her rival more fortunate in being wholly free from worldly distractions. This promising artist, who had begun some years earlier than Marie, was a thorn in her side, for she continually tested herself by the attainments of the former."—Mathilde Blind.

I am reading Stendhal's *Amour*. There are things in it so true as to frighten one. The chapter on "Infatuation" well portrays my impressions. He writes there of "the too ardent soul," or ardent to excess, loving on trust, so to speak, which throws itself upon objects instead of awaiting them. "They see things not as they are, but as they have made them, and, enjoying themselves under the guise of such object, they believe they are enjoying the object. But one fine day they grow tired of paying all the expenses; they discover that the adored object does not return the ball; the infatuation collapses, and the rebuff which self-love experiences makes them unjust to the over-esteemed object."

As for him, however, I am not in love with him—I feel it is not yet that. "If you spend yourself in words, in pleasantries, in enthusiasm for J—— and R——," says the judicious architect, "you will do

wrong to your art." O, great architect! adept in the first of arts, you are right. As I present to you Anatole and Orestes as side-dishes, and they occupy me only in my leisure, it is thus that it should be among busy people. They say Michael Angelo never loved. Ah, well! I understand that! And if I never have really encouraging success I shall be capable of loving only my art.

Tuesday, 4th December 1883.

Things don't progress as I should like; all day I have stayed in the gas and have not got out. That gives me an air as concentrated, as disagreeable, as Bastien-Lepage, and I am tickled by it as before I was tickled to hold a skirt like Breslau.

It is not the disagreeable but the indifferent air, be it said. One is not interested in what people say; one looks upon them

as mere objects, one is up above; that is not popular.

8th December 1883.

I must note my work against the time when I reproach myself with doing nothing.

Yes, I believe he ridicules my music. I am very sentimental at bottom, and every moment I wound all sentimental natures by my philosophic and mocking airs. I rail at everybody and myself. But the idea that any one can ridicule me ! ! ! even sweetly . . . horrible ! ! horrible ! !

I shall perhaps never see him again, but these reflections are applicable to another. He who is called J—— for the moment is the *he* of woman, the *he* whom one awaits.

He is called P——, he was called J——, he will be called X—— or Y——. It is a formula to briefly sum up a thousand aspirations.

Monday, 10th December 1883.

I feel that I have taken such flights towards the great things that my feet no longer touch earth. What dominates is the fear of not having time to do everything. It is a fatiguing condition, perhaps, but one is happy.

I shall not live long: you know the children who have too much spirits. And then, humbug apart, I believe the candle is cut in four, and burns at every end. It is not that I boast of it. . . . Leonardo da Vinci did everything, and did nothing *very well.* Michael Angelo—but Michael Angelo, when he had to paint, did no sculpture for thirteen years. I invoke the great names. Do not laugh, I know I am nothing; only when one cites Michael Angelo or Leonardo the argument is unanswerable.

Wednesday, 19*th December* 1883.

When one really works and is devoured by ambition, one is no longer good for anything; everything disappears, the preoccupation is so great, so continual, so intense. Then artists should never be lovers? I do not say that; an artist who has won his place can pay for that luxury, and while he pays his work will be stopped, or very nearly.

Saturday, 22*nd December* 1883.

I have made Julian come for my statue, which is finished as a sketch. He is entranced, and says, "Very good, exquisite, charming, captivating," which means that I no longer esteem Julian.

As for my great landscape, the head of Armandine, the little girl, is quite good. He says, "that was at first much better, then very good, and we are approaching the moment when it will be quite good."

And thou art not mad with joy? No. Why? Because it is not my opinion, because I am not myself very well content, I wish to do better. It is not the scruple of the artist of genius. It is . . . I know not what.

23rd December 1883.

Happiness, see you, lies in a kind of moral myopia, and not in that refinement of taste which we give ourselves so much trouble to acquire, and which is innate. One suffers in a thousand ways unknown to the vulgar. It is like a man whose eye is fastened to a microscope: the unhappy being could not drink nor eat nor love any one.

The faults of taste and tact, the stupid conversations, the richly decorated salons, the lamentable pictures, all this offends, bores, tires, and, above all, saddens one;

from seeing repugnant and irritating objects one acquires a kind of sad and resigned indifference.

26th December 1883.

The Slav race lacks one knows not what. The salons hold people of all nationalities; they have all their postures, but . . . how should I put it? They have them only in fugitive fashion. They are stupid and witty, refined and vulgar, indeed one does not know truly how to define them. And I! Evidently I believe I have all merits. How, then, to explain the frequent discontents I cause myself? I explain them by saying that I have all the merits, but that I do not know how to make use of them. It is like my talent. I combine all, but that does not make the way clear. Go! bamboozle yourself, my little one; that is to poach on someone else's preserves.

Sunday, 30th December.

Emile Bastien has come; he has returned from Damvilliers, where Jules will remain till February. I only love my glory. Oh, yes! Lord my God. Let us concentrate. I have lost three or five days. It is a cause of fearful torments.

Monday, 7th January 1884.

Portrait of Dina.[1] At three o'clock Marechale de Canrobert came to take us, Claire and me, to Boulanger's. This old school is horrified by "the indecent exhibition of Manet." "It is revolting. What are we coming to?" I support her opinion to such an extent that Claire goes into the corners of the studio not to be caught bursting out laughing.

It seems to me that all is finished, that

[1] Her cousin. This pastel is hung in the Luxembourg.

no one will love me any more. . . . And, for the rest, I am going to die.

Tuesday, 8th January.

They have mounted my "Nausicaa," and the imbecile of a workman has made it too big. However, I do not complain; only it is tiring. Yet, if I were like those devotees who offer their torments to God that He may recompense them! It would be simpler not to trouble any one. Our ideas are not very catholic on this point; it seems that that is called being a spiritualist. . . . Go for a good spiritualist!

Wednesday, 9th January.

I am tempted to give thanks to God that I have repainted the cap on the left in the picture, and it looks to me very good. I have a nature so diverse and so droll that I

might be one of the happiest creatures in the universe if . . . I really meant to be.

Saturday, 12th January.

Marechale Canrobert comes to take us, Claire and me, and we go to Lefebvre's and Tony Robert-Fleury's.

I ought to confess that I did not do enough justice to Lefebvre's talent. I have seen in his place things of an ideal form. Exactitude, firmness, grace, are pushed to the utmost. I like this drawing better than that of Ingres; there are in Lefebvre delicacies of line which literally enchant the eye. And nothing is nebulous, undecided; an unerring and ravishing precision. I believe no one does the nude like him. It is not fine, broad painting—granted; yet it has refinement and exquisite delicacy, and at the same time great power. His portraits are ad-



M. LEFEBVRE.

mirable, although lacking brilliance and perhaps more, but the figure is so true that it makes one forget everything else . . . almost.

At the beginning Lefebvre did not recognise me; on learning that it was I he changed completely, becoming very amiable and thanking me for the honour that I did him in calling, adding that he was particularly pleased to see me. He will come to my studio on Sunday next.

This evening at dinner, every one quite familiar. I was in white for our[1] New Year, and was very taking.

I start the year passably and even well. I only expected artistic encouragement, and to-night there are none but friends.

Friday, 18th January.

I am in a mood for weeping to-day. To

[1] The Russian.

the thought of seeing my yesterday's painting again is joined the terror of finding it bad, and I weep . . . real tears. What would you have? I am as enthusiastic as a nineteen-year-old student in Germany. And in the abstract world, in the domain of art, of thought, of ideas—ah, well! I have not the happiness of knowing those who busy themselves with these fantastic domains. I know men of the world and three artists, all told.

I have recommenced a sketch of women. Everything is in the charm that I shall know how (?) to give to the atmosphere. Yes, it must be evening, that fugitive hour when the crescent moon seems quite pale. This on a large scale. I shall never know (how to do it).

Bastien-Lepage had to make fifty studies to catch this effect. Ah, well! I will do fifty-five, and it will need them, too. Ah, that is not a lifetime!

Monday, 28th January.

At five o'clock I try a new model for Nausicaa. And in the evening I am writing—what? Ah! I do not know. I have not yet found the cast. . . . Only what is incontestable is that it is more natural for me to write than to paint.

The true painter draws, sketches, composes almost without knowing it. I, also, drew, but not too much, with this idea, "I am gifted for painting, and some fine day I shall do it." Meanwhile I have masses of literary sketches, like the portfolio of a painter who knows nothing, but has the calling. One cannot do so many things . . . but if . . . to paint while it is daylight, model till dinner-time, and write afterwards.

And to live?

To live? When I have talent. And if I die before? I shall regret nothing. Dear

angel! I am admirable, and I adore myself. It is because I have worked well to-day, and I have also tried some sublime dresses, sublime. . . .

For, what does one need? In default of having lived everything, one must feel vividly, and live altogether in imagination.

It is so much the more so that I have passed twenty years, and at this age one may even have visions. . . . But I have not the time, and after having remained for several hours standing, with arms in the air, to mould the clay, one has only one desire, to sleep and begin again to-morrow.

I am very happy.

Tuesday, 29th January.

I have been to see Munkaczy's "Christ on the Cross." The house of the happy Munkaczy is a veritable marvel. As for the picture . . . Christ between the two thieves,

many people around, a black sky, the figures stand out against the light. Very fine colour, movement, expressions, physiognomies, garments, superb tones—it is very grandly painted.

There is in the gallery at Madrid a Christ on the cross, a Christ quite alone, by Velasquez which produces so poignant an effect that one cannot look at it for long.

Munkaczy's picture is much admired; the Jewish garments, with such beautiful tones, are dazzling. . . . Women weep at the foot of the Cross; but in my opinion . . . Nevertheless I shall wait a few days to judge. It did not seem to me forcible enough; that is it perhaps.

This picture, with *something* more, would make one shudder. As it is, I admire it and ask myself why I am not moved.

Wednesday, 30th January 1884.

Hardly anything done. Tried dresses.

We have Claire, Villevieille, the priest, the princess, and Gailhard to dinner. Gailhard and I speak of serious things, the others listen, the priest occasionally joins in the conversation . . . politics, Tonkin and Ferry, politics, and psychological researches. It seems to me that I have been very witty, leading with long phrases up to an unexpected climax in a very calm voice. He takes me seriously, the Radical husband of the Countess de Z——. This with the air of surprising me that I am taken seriously. . . . Insolent!

Friday, 1st February.

I work at the picture out of doors; then we call on the Canroberts and Princess Jeanne Bonaparte. We find only her mother, who is still beautiful at fifty-two, th long supple white hands. Tell me breed from such hands! This evening,

glazing at the water-colourists; enormous crowds; few acquaintances; tired.

Saturday, 2nd February.

Bojidar Karageorgevitch sits. Princess Jeanne Bonaparte comes; I receive her in the studio; then I go down—it is Mamma's Saturday. There was, the only pretty one, little Deschanel of the Collége de France. He writes in the *Débats*, and imitates the Delaunays in amateur plays. Very exquisite, and very sympathetic; a good boy.[1] . . .

[1] "The correct Paul Deschanel," as she calls him on a later page, has been for some years President of the French Chamber. Speaking of his re-election to that office in January last, the Paris correspondent of the *Daily News* said :—

"As a man cut out for society, M. Deschanel is fond, to quote the poet Moore, of 'the bowers where pleasure lies carelessly smiling at ease.' Indeed there is a good deal in him of the poet Moore. He is an anacreontic, literary, is said to have written the most exquisitely turned love letters, and not for novels either, and is a devoted son. M. Deschanel was singled out by the late Félix Faure as the Deputy best suited to represent

At all events, I am in good humour, a rare thing. It seems to me that my painting is good; the time passes quickly.

I write in bed. To-morrow is Sunday; I am going to church, so it is useless to go to sleep early. But I am perhaps mad, for I have just been weeping over the shepherds of Bethlehem, and I shall not sleep at all.

Observe the evening, the air of evening, the atmosphere which envelops objects; a calm picture; and these worthy men walking, full of joy, guided by a Star that sparkles in a sky of beautiful blue; not too blue, for it is not quite night.

Ah well! but I adore it myself! Neither Jeanne d'Arc, nor anything on earth, is comparable with the divine Shepherds. I

the Chamber at the fêtes that were to have been given at the Elysée if the Emperor and Empress of Russia visited the Exhibition. . . . The new French term 'un arriviste' is liberally applied to him by his enemies. No doubt his agreeable manners contributed to his success."

have not been so mad except for my Holy Women. Oh! but I shall do them this summer, in June, in Italy. Oh! for sure, if God permits it.

I am an artist in the full acceptation of the word; every artist is poet or visionary.

Cazin has succeeded with some little night landscapes in this style; very beautiful. Am I insane, or am I right? I prefer a little canvas of Cazin, with a black ship against a blue sky full of stars, to all the celebrated dark and smoky landscapes of the museums. Impossible trees! no atmosphere! And why celebrated? Whilst with Cazin one feels the freshness of night, and one is moved as by a really beautiful night at Nice with the moon, which will be reflected presently in the still sea whose light movement is audible. Ah! how beautiful it is!

I once had a dream, years ago! I saw

most brilliant stars; I watched them; there were five. I made some of them fall by merely looking at them. As for the fifth, I reached out my hand to take it . . . it was silver paper, and the sky blue cardboard, and to detach it I had to scratch it with my nails. This means nothing; but I write because it is pleasant. I shall fall asleep writing, for these confounded Shepherds bother me. I want to use up this energy by writing.

Sunday, 3rd February.

It is nearly two o'clock, and I am writing in bed, after returning from the Italiens, where they sang Massenet's "Hérodiade." I was with the Maréchale de Canrobert and Claire.

The first act surprised me by the novelty and largeness of sound. It resembles nothing I know. Truly it is new and full

and sonorous and harmonious. The whole House listened with rapture. The music is of one body with the poem; airs and padding are absent. It is large, magnificent, grandiose. Massenet is a great artist, and henceforth a national glory. They make out that beautiful music is not understood at the first hearing. Come now! Here one understands at once that it is admirable and melodious, in spite of a very learned orchestration.

(But I did not even know Wagner.)

There is at the end of the first act an accompaniment of such beauty that I sat thrilled. Several times one watched with eyes ready to weep with enthusiasm. If these dogs of spectators had been sincere they would have wept.

Without doubt my Italian music cannot stand against this splendour. Massenet is a melodious and French Wagner. That is the comparison. The Wagner is Manet;

he is the unfinished father of the new school, of those who seek talent in truth and feeling. There have always been new schools; only a hundred years ago painting went astray. It is being set in the right way again. There the Wagner is Manet. The amorous note is lacking in "Hérodiade," notwithstanding the stupid idea of making St. John the lover of Salomé. I should have liked him better as an enthusiast, a prophet, and her as an enthusiast. Yet love would be inevitable. I should have loved John myself. Yes, Massenet is an open-air artist; he requires air in an opera, from one end to the other; he wants the characters and the melodies to move in a musical atmosphere that envelops them and makes them live.

Wednesday, 6th February.

I have been to Julian's to show him the Raudouin portrait. This Marseillais has a

very contented air, and tells me it gets better and better. It is not my opinion of this portrait. I detest it. But if others think like Julian. . . . Ah, well! I shall do it over again all the same; I shall try to make it please me. Julian provokes me. He insists on talking to me like this: "Your soundness in painting gets better and better." He will have it that I have been very strong, then run down, then strong again. It is false, false, false! My sketches are there. Test it.

Tuesday, 12th February.

Marshal Canrobert came to see his daughter's work, and he remained rather surprised but enraptured. Between four and five o'clock I give advice to Mlle. de Villevieille on the pose and the character of her picture. After my death all these women will be like the collaborators of the

elder Dumas. Each will say, "It is I who have given her the idea of this; it is I who have helped her to execute that!"

Friday, 15th February.—Saturday, 16th February.

A splendid soirée at the Italiens. I go with the G——s, Princess Jeanne Bonaparte, her husband.

Mme. G—— finds me very pretty, dressed to kill (corsage black velvet, classic décolleté), hair well dressed, shoulders of marble, "quite the shoulders that show the breed." Nothing less! The opinion of Mme. G—— is the echo of the majority always. But that is not why the soirée has been splendid; it is because we had Gayarré, the incomparable Spanish tenor. He had an ovation that he will remember. The straight-laced men and women were among the enthusiasts. He has a miraculous voice.

19th February.

I cannot write for rage and enervation. After labours and experiments without number, I have got the dreamed-of pose for the portrait of Dina. It is very nice to do, and I have now only to paint. And they hinder me! There remain only twenty-three days! Artists will understand my despair.

Thursday, 21st February.

Dina's head, begun yesterday, is painted, save the expression in the eyes.

They made me angry at lunch by talking stupidities about the Meissonnier incident. Mme. M—— found Meissonnier, and ordered her portrait of him. After some hesitation, it seems, Meissonnier said, "Yes, but it will be 70,000 francs." The portrait has been exhibited at the Triennial,

and is considered mediocre. Mme. M—— asks to have it re-touched. Meissonnier refuses. Mme. M—— threatens to leave the portrait against the bill. Meissonnier says they will go to law. Mme. M——, persuaded by some friends, pays, accepts the work, and puts it out of the way. And all Paris stamps on the foreigner. In my opinion Mme. M—— lacked delicacy in showing her discontent with an artist like Meissonnier, who had done all he could, who is seventy-three years old, and who has produced masterpieces. But Meissonnier lacked nobility in forcing the ignorant *bourgeoise* (I admit it) to pay, all the same.

23rd February.

If Christ returned, he certainly would not recognise the doctrines that he preached in Catholicism and in. . . . But Christ would

recognise the Bible for all that. Which proves that he was only a man and that it is necessary to take account of his humanity, his environment, and his country. . . . However sublime a genius, he could not but be subject to all those influences. If he had been God he would not have supported himself on the predictions of the Scripture, he would have . . .

Thou art going to prescribe the retrospective conduct of Christ, dear child? Get thee to bed!

25th February.

With an unequalled constancy I work at Dina, that I shall show to no one till it is finished.

B—— and the architect to dinner. The latter has been ill; that is the explanation of his long absence. His brother is always ill. He leaves for Algeria in ten days.

Make way for the Shepherds of Bethlehem! If he does them before my "Holy Women" my dearest plan falls to pieces! Both are evening effects; I should have the appearance of imitating him; it would be impossible.

Bastien-Lepage is from Lorraine. Jeanne D'arc, the most extraordinary of heroines and even of heroes, was from Lorraine. Bastien-Lepage has made a chef-d'œuvre of her, and in my mad presumption I felt myself, in it, related to all the heroes and all the chef-d'œuvres. Here one might develop an interesting thesis: the mysterious ties that unite heroes and masterpieces to all those who think, for the sun, the air, the beauties of nature belong to all!

My words are obscure, but if there are men who think like me they will understand—the others will never understand, even if the lucid, easy, practical, logical M. Clémenceau set himself to explain it to

them. I admire Clémenceau. He lacks passion, but he obtains almost the same effect by dint of accuracy in expression.

29th February 1884.

I am painting Dina. Only, how I fear to say anything. . . . I have enormous emotions. When one attains, is one always so unhappy and moved before nature? Naïve, grand artist, thou wouldst have thyself say that without these torments one is but an artisan? Good!

But, my God! it is possible I deceive myself, and one is so stupid and ridiculous then.

Thursday, 6th March 1884.

What had to be has come about. There remain to me eight days and the portrait is not finished. Oh! I am calm!

My exhibit among the women is remarked; they quote me with eulogies in the great papers where I know no one.

I am sad, unhappy, ill; and now this makes me burst into tears. I am on the verge of having talent, and I have no longer health. I try to impose upon myself, but it is impossible. There remain to me eight days, and the portrait has to be done. I no longer see it, I no longer know what I am doing, these three months past.

But . . . eight days . . . two for the head, two for the arm, one for the other, one for the dress, one for the hand. There must be no failure, and yet! Ah, pity!

Friday, 7th March.

Since the portrait is done for, I want to know if the picture needs some serious retouches. I send to find the architect,

who comes at eight o'clock, and his first words apprised us that his brother has been in Paris for two days, very ill; his mother is with him. He expressed his lively regrets not to be in a state to come to see the picture. He leaves in three or four days for Algiers. He has nothing for the Salon. He is in bed, it appears. Let us hope Algeria will set him up again.

I made a pen sketch. The architect, a cord passed around his body, drags it vigorously toward a post with the inscription "Rue Ampère." At the end of the cord lies his brother, flat on his stomach, clinging with both hands to the sign post "Rue Legendre." I am sending him this sketch.

There remain to me only seven days, and I begin again to hope that the portrait will be finished. There is nothing done but the background and one arm. It is madness.

Monday, 10th March.

It is begun and not badly. Claire, in a hat, out of doors; she has much character and poses well.

But I am distressed not to have my portrait white, with the bare arms and neck of the Academy, the beautiful Academy. A flat arrangement. An indoor dress, all white. Ah! that was beautiful. I shall do it yet.

My excessive imagination has caused me to make a journey into Palestine before dinner. I shall do some studies and a picture, and in the month of October I shall go to Palestine and do my "Holy Women."

Sunday, 16th March.

Many people came. First the Canroberts and the Marshal, Mme. Hochon

and her mother, Carrier-Belleuse, Dupuis, Paul Deschanel, Dr. Guesnay, and others.

But I was too nervous to know who was who. Visits succeeded each other without interruption till four o'clock in the evening. They have taken down the pictures. The Maréchale, Villevieille, Claire, myself, and the doctor got into noble carriages, conducted by the correct Paul Deschanel, bareheaded, and the others. The doors wide open, all the urchins who had left the shelter gathered round and watched those invited, in the vestibule.

It was radiant weather. An enormous mob of daubers. What pictures! My God, lessen the number of painters! Each of us carries under his arm a little frame so as to enter without difficulty. When these brigands, gathered at the entrance, saw four ladies and an old decorated gentleman, each with a parcel under his arm,

there was a ferocious clamour. . . . We found ourselves at the head of the staircase, rather upset by this reception; and as we began to look about in the galleries, other wretches came in amid other cries, yet more piercing, and whistles. Ah, well! it is very amusing. Only we await the arrival of our canvases till six o'clock; the carriage was late; at six we are still on the staircase, waiting. It is there that Gervese spoke to me for a moment.

Tuesday, 25th March.

The picture is sketched out.

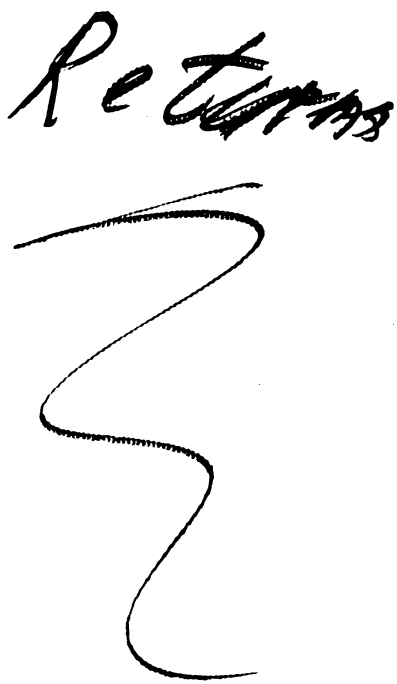
The architect writes to ask whether he may dine this evening, and adds, "I know the sympathy you have for myself and my brother, so I shall come to talk to you of what I have so much at heart." Considering these words of friendship and the really grave illness of his brother, Mamma and



MARIE BASHKIRTSEFF'S STUDIO.

even Rosalie recommended me not to permit myself any nonsense; it would be cruel and in bad taste.

He had in his pocket a letter from his



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even Rosalie recommended me not to permit myself any nonsense; it would be cruel and in bad taste.

He had in his pocket a letter from his brother, who writes to his friend Charles Baude (the engraver). He gave it me at my request. Eight pages of small, tortured writing and erasures, like my illustrious correspondent. The letter is quite charming. He speaks of what "Mamma" says of the Arabs. He goes out with "Mamma;" then fresh impressions and delightful things, from the heart, and not an ordinary man's. . . . But this letter, which enables me to penetrate into the intimacy of this man whom I hardly know, makes a certain impression on me, and I set myself to sneer, to quote passages to ridicule them, and I end by saying that "this being is not even sick."

Imagine the effect! And at each exclamation the architect says that he cannot

bear this, that it is as if one laughed at God before a priest. As I saw he would leave under a bad impression, I accused him of misunderstanding me, and ended by summoning him to beg my pardon.

Emile Bastien-Lepage tells me that more than twenty persons have spoken to him of my landscape at the Union of Women Painters. Duez spoke to him of it. "You positively hold the ropes," he said; "a real success."

That is delightful; so I have done well to send this landscape to the Salon.

Saturday, 29th March.

We are going to the Italiens to-night. They are giving *Lucie de Lammermoor*, and Gayarré sings. The music is divine and will never grow old, for it has no stamp of fashion, no fondness save that of expressing sentiments such as love,

hatred, sorrow. But these are eternal sentiments, and, in short, there is nothing beyond that. Melodrama, do you say? I laugh at that, provided I am moved, and I am moved when Edgar appears at the top of the steps. At the moment when, having torn up the contract, he breaks out into imprecations it is maddening. Some people say that Gayarré sings through the nose, and screams. The pack of idiots! The truth is that this man has a miraculous voice, and that one thinks neither of science nor method in listening to him. He sings like a court singer who has an artist's soul. He has shade and expression, and acts as well as sings. In the septet, when he says, "Si, ingratto, t'amo, t'amo encor!" it is absolutely admirable, and one hears him alone, despite the cries of the others. A polished actor might not speak it so; for, with Gayarré it is true, it is natural, human; common, therefore, to

all peoples and all classes. In the expression of absolutely *sincere* sentiments there is only human nature—habit, education, everything disappears. Shakespeare understood that, and Shakespeare is great because he is neither English, nor aristocrat, nor plebeian, nor of any period; but eternally true, like hatred, sorrow, love.

And the desire of being placed on the line at the Salon? After all I have No. 3 like last year. It is hard! It appears I have had so many votes for No. 2 that they thought I would have it. It is a considerable blow, and all my hopes are shattered.

Is it, then, that my picture is bad? Then how comes it that things notoriously inferior had number 2? One loses oneself in conjectures, and, I should like to think, with injustice. For the moment I should like to think they have been very unjust. It is frightfully disgusting, and I have a horror

of taking steps to obtain what is my due. And then I believe in my inferiority ; and, besides, I am ashamed to ask favours. . . . It is dreadful.

Monday, 7th April.

This evening Julian dines with us. This Julian takes an extreme pleasure in telling me dreadful things about myself. I am bad, nothing of the woman, a fantastic brain, etc. I remember no more of the flattering horrors he has indulged in.

And then we talk painting.

Sunday, 13th April.

I remain in the house in order to reply to the unknown (Guy de Maupassant)—I should say that it is I who am unknown to him. He has already replied three times. This is not a Balzac whom one adores completely. Now I regret that I did not ad-

dress myself to Zola but to his lieutenant, who has talent, and a good deal of it. He is, among the young, the one who has pleased me. I woke up one beautiful morning with the desire of getting the pretty things I know how to say appreciated by a connoisseur. I searched and chose him.

Friday, 18th April.

As I foresaw, all is broken off between my correspondent and myself. His fourth[1] and last letter is coarse and stupid.

For the rest, as I am telling him in my last reply, these things need a boundless admiration on the part of the unknown. I think that he is not satisfied, but what do I care for that!

Is it unfortunate not to be more simple? Or is there a living being I could admire completely? Balzac is dead, Victor Hugo

[1] Letter VIII., page 84

is eighty-two years old, Dumas fils sixty. There is one of them, however, whom I have adored.

Wednesday, 23rd April, to Sunday, 27th April.

Rosalie brings me from the poste restante a letter from Guy de Maupassant.[1] The fifth is the best. We are not angry any longer. And since he has done in the *Gaulois* a delightful *chronique*, I feel myself appeased. It is so amusing!

This man whom I did not know occupies all my thoughts. Does he think of me? Why does he write to me?

29th April, 1884.

I am engaged in replying to Guy de Maupassant. I could not have done anything, so impatiently do I await the var-

[1] Letter X., page 148.

nishing. Verily, literature is capturing me. Vanish Dumas, Zola, all! It is I who arrive! But I shall open the *Figaro* and the *Gaulois* with trembling! If they say nothing it is a disaster. And if they speak what will they say? My heart stops at the thought, then beats slowly.

Thursday, 1st May.

We go to the Salon with G——.

The Salon! Does it really become worse and worse, or is it I who become more and more exacting?

There is nothing to see. This mass of painting without conviction, without thought, without soul, is horrible. They are malignant, save the great decorative composition of Puvis de Chavannes. This man is senseless in his small pictures, but his great decorative canvases are beautiful.

This transports you into an archaic, strange, and very poetical atmosphere. After all, it is neither drawn nor painted, not human, but . . . And yet I am only beginning to like it. It is a conversion. There is also a little canvas by Béraud, an Anarchist club; it is altogether charming and spirituel. There is also the portrait of the beautiful Mme. —— by Sargent. It is a great success of curiosity; people find it atrocious. For me it is perfect painting, masterly, true. But he has done what he saw. The beautiful Mme. —— is horrible in daylight, for she paints herself, despite her twenty-six years. This chalky paint gives to the shoulders the tone of a corpse. Further, she paints her ears rose and her hair mahogany. The eyebrows are traced in dark mahogany color, two thick lines.

To myself my picture seems an old painting. And then I no longer see the necessity of anything at all. What should I invent

that is new in art? If this is not so, to make one's way with the flash of a meteor, what is the good of it? To have talent? That only? Then after? To die, for we must always die. And life is sad, dreadful, black. What shall I become? What do? Where go? Why? How to be happy? I am weary before I have done anything. I have used up all enjoyments in imagination; I have dreamed of such great things that what may come to me will be small beside them. And then? and then?

Then, to-morrow, the day after, or in eight days, some foolery will happen which will change the current of my ideas, and then the thing will begin all over again, and then death.

Friday, 2nd May.

Last night, for all my lugubrious ideas, I nevertheless went to Mme. Hochon's to

receive compliments on my picture. Black dress, velvet corsage décolleté, a bit of black tulle on the shoulders, and violets. There was music. Massenet played and sang. Then the amiable and always charmed and charming Carolus Duran sang. There were the Fleurys, Madeleine Lemaire, the Franchesis, the Canroberts. The Marshal took me in to supper. Then the painters, Munkaczy and his wife, Hébert, etc. I must really go out; this little party has done me good. As it rained I went to Julian's. He said he would not stake two hands for a medal, but that he would stake quite one and a half; and that he would tell me nothing of it if it were not almost certain. A pleasant evening with Julian and T y Robert-Fleury. Tony Robert-F ry me he led his father before my out saying whose it was, and found it *very good, very good,* really.

Sunday, 4th May 1884.

Since Monday I have done nothing. I pass long hours with arms hanging down. To dream of nothing or of love. Goncourt says that women always have a love affair, near or far. It is very true—sometimes.

Tuesday, 6th May.

I am foolish to wish to write. Can I? And yet an invincible power urges me to it. Oh! that is from long ago—from the novel begun in 1875 and never finished, and before and since and always. Now I have come to a point at which all these dreams and all the observations caught in flight *want* to take bodily form. It seems as though one had the subjects for ten books in one's head. One does not know where

to commence; and when it is a question of realising these dreams one is stopped after a dozen pages.

For the rest, I speak to you of it because I note here the particular states of my mind. There is even a quantity of things already written. But I laugh at my pretensions. It would be rather a fine absurdity, to write! After all, I renounce it; I say "No." I laugh at myself, because I am too much afraid of being comical, and it is an irresistible inclination.

After all, it is a sweet folly that makes me happy, before which I am troubled, moved, as though I entertained it seriously. And I dream of it perhaps too seriously to confess it even here. But one life would not suffice, mine especially.

To touch everything and leave nothing after oneself!

Ah! my God! I hope better than that. Ah! I am very cowardly, and under the

blow of such a terror I am ready to believe in priests.

Saturday, 10th May.

In the morning, at the Salon with Claire de Canrobert; lunch in the Rue de Marignan at the Canroberts'. Many people there. I am bored. What does that mean? It is the month of May that troubles me, probably. Yes.

This evening, at the Italiens. After this panegyric of Etincelle in the *Figaro* I am much stared at, which embarrasses me, for I am not sure of looking my best. All these people watch me, and opera-glasses are turned upon me from every box.

Wednesday, 14th May.

A letter from Guy de Maupassant.[1] What does he think, that man? He is a

[1] Letter XII., p. 154.

hundred leagues from knowing who I am, for I have spoken of it to no one, not even to Julian. And I, what am I going to tell him ?

My picture, "Jean et Jacques," has obtained an honourable mention at Nice. Everyone is mad with joy except myself.

Friday, 16th May.

We go to the Salon ; not a few acquaintances. Mdlle. Abbema tells me that her brother-in-law, M. Paul Mantz (of *Le Temps*), finds me highly talented. A little later we meet a renowned painter, Mdlle. Arosa. She is with a lady who causes herself to be introduced, to say that she is the daughter of M. Paul Mantz. It would seem rather silly to repeat here all these flattering things. When they are simply worldlings I never mention it, for politeness exacts these compliments. But Ab-

bema and the daughter of Paul Mantz, in telling me what the great critic thinks of me, insist on making me clearly understand what an unheard-of chance is the opinion of a man like him.

He has had, it appears, an article in *Le Temps*, and I have received twenty-two or twenty-three essays from different journals. As for myself, I laugh at them. They think much of my picture and myself. I have put on for the first time a dark grey woollen dress, very simple and very stylish, a black straw hat, Watteau fashion.

Since Bastien-Lepage is so ill, all pique of pride has disappeared. I fear it no longer; there is a kind of pleasure in it. Suppose that an emperor whom one would salute afar off with humble reserve fell into a ravine, breaking his legs and one could succour him. . . .

Saturday, 17th May.

To-night at the Clovis Hugues'. Ah! it is curious! Atrocious women and long-haired poets, fevered imbeciles! When Mistral came in even the women rose. They served up to this unfortunate fellow I know not how many pieces of verse. Mistral is like a pretty policeman. He sang twenty or thirty couplets, taken up in chorus by the audience.

There are fewer celebrities than I expected. In fact there were only Mistral, Clovis Hugues, Paul Aréne, Jules Gaillard, and some small fry.

I had a turn of polka with Clovis Hugues. After that we left with Mme. Gaillard, who is enthusiastic about what Paul Mantz told her of me.

20th May 1884.

Robert-Fleury says that Duez likes my

painting much. Duez is one of the jury, but I shall have the votes against me.

For the rest I am very calm, pre-occupied with my illness and with what I am going to do next; this Salon and these pictures are of the past, and I already look forward. If I do not get the medal, my picture will none the less have been seen.

Wednesday, 21st May.

Julian comes to dine this evening. He did not wish to come, he says, not having good news to bring. However, it was well started; but when the moment arrives, each one is reserved.

I, so calm, am afraid of beginning to agitate myself.

We have read some letters of Guy de Maupassant; so with that the evening passed. He was extremely amused with mine and his. Ah! Julian is a good public.

He seems to have made a discovery; I am only an audacious braggart, at bottom, a child that a coarse word confounds. He says that if I had only waited two days I should have replied with things that would have left Maupassant a little boy for life; and that, having hurried, I showed myself a little girl, a girl who saw a great person, her idol, acting badly, and who was thunderstruck.

Thursday, 22nd May.

I had promised, long ago, to go to see Carolus Duran, and this morning I remember the promise. He receives on Thursday mornings. We go there then. This charming man was in a velvet jacket, and he has, my faith, outlined I know not what Spanish step while a friend played on the guitar. Afterwards I played the organ and he sang.

I begin to be a little nervous. A year ago, to a day, I was in the agonies of the naming. Ah! it's nothing!

Friday, 23rd May.

Opening of the Meissonnier Exhibition, rue de Sèze, for the benefit of the night shelters. Mamma is patroness. There are six millions worth of pictures there, and it's only a third of what he has done. I am in dark grey. Many acquaintances. A very pleasant quarter of an hour. Thence we went to the Salon. Few people. Carolus Duran, always charming. I hope much that he will vote for me.

M. N—— announces his visit for this evening, and says, "After all do not grieve." And we see that he has spoken of me to all the artists. Could this be a move of X—— to reduce me to modesty and buy something from me very cheap?



M. CAROLUS DURAN.

I receive a note from the architect:—

"DEAR MADEMOISELLE—They are asses, all! Medals are only made for nobodies. Do better still! One can always do better; it is the only way of avenging yourself. A real artist is above all this jobbery. Believe me, your friend and your admirer.

"EMILE BASTIEN-LEPAGE."

Wednesday, 28th May.

I reply to M. Julian:—

"MONSIEUR—Do not suppose me to be very much agitated because I write to you again. I no longer recollect my letter, but I told him in substance that, without being in a rage, I no longer believe M. Julian capable of having played comedy.

"I should like, then, to know, dear Master, all about it, what the honourable jury

says, what are the principal faults. Why! I think less well of my painting than anybody; but in spite of myself, I see on the right and on the left things rewarded, and I am plunged into an ocean of doubt. The only thing that interests me is to know whether my picture is good or bad. Do not tell me it is good in order to console me. It is better to tell me the truth and not let me persist in a vain path. The things I consider feeble or absurd are perhaps the good ones; I deceive myself—that is all. I know one always attains if one is really strong, but what delay and what pain!

"I am really ashamed to speak so much of myself, but I must defend myself. I believe myself very impartial. I am at once actor and spectator: the spectator Me judges the painting of the actor Me.

"It is not good compared with a master,

but compared with those who have got medals—Oh, Lord!"

Friday, 30th May.

This evening we went to the Marquise de C——'s. Mme. Krausse, the Vicomtesse de Tredern, Princesse Jeanne Bonaparte, etc., etc., were there. The Countess de Tredern is a great lady, who has got an enormous advertisement as an aristocratic singer. She is pretty, immensely rich, and sings very well—in fact, one of the rare talents of the great world. I am dismal, and dream of the philosophy of love as well as the love of the philosophers. All the people round me had real preoccupations while I weltered in abstractions.

Monday, 2nd June.

Emile Bastien-Lepage dines here. His brother only adds a few lines to his

mother's letter. He no longer writes to his dearest friends, does not work, and endures horrible suffering, physical and mental. He writes: "Thank the Bashkirtseffs for me and give them my kind regards. I have read the newspaper articles on Mdlle. Bashkirtseff, and her success does not surprise me."

The kind architect says I have had the medal, because all the artists noticed my picture and I am known, and have had a great and true success.

I have a subject for a picture. It came to me at three o'clock, and this evening at dinner I saw what I should do so distinctly that it made me jump up as if there were a spring in the chair. I was just wanting a modern subject with plenty of figures, something nude, and a not too large canvas. The very thing; I am going to do it. What? Ah, well, some outlandish wrestlers, with people round them. There will be



MARIE BASHKIRTSEFF'S LAST PICTURE.

bare bodies to show that I can do the nude. And the people around—that will be very difficult; but if it lays hold of me, that is all that is necessary—intoxication!

Saturday, 21st June.

I am thinner by half. For two months it has been possible to follow day by day the progress of this attenuation. It is no longer Venus Callipyge—it is Diana. Diana may change into a carcase. In appearance I am well and live as usual. But I have fever every day. Sometimes in the day, sometimes in the night. Nightmare, hallucinations.

Disciples of Maupassant, do not attribute this condition to the sleeplessness of a full-grown girl! No, my poor friends, it is not that. Dreams of love, I make them every evening to send me to sleep—at least, when I do not think of some picture.

No, it is real fever, fatiguing and stupefying.

So I am resolved to go and see Dr. Potain. You understand, this is not the moment to die. There are triumphant articles in the society papers in Paris and in England.

My dress and my coiffure of the Russian Embassy are going the round of the Press —coiffure *à la* Psyche, they say. I have also fifty papers that speak of my salon and some serious art criticisms. I begin to have talent, and I see myself wither.

I have read Daudet's new book, over which Paris is distracted. It is called *Sappho.* I have read it twice, wishing to be reconciled with Daudet's style, which unnerves me. Am I ridiculous to be provoked by it? It runs, runs; it spins along, always quickly. It is a flight, a scattering. The reader strives to follow, breathless. It is all scraps of phrases, scraps thrown off,

as if regretfully, by a pitiful man, who is too much pressed to say as much as he knows, and always something sinister in hints *à propos* of fried potatoes. It is like a picture painted in dabs—the eye is fidgeted by not being able to rest on anything solid. An endless pizzicato.

How Zola would execrate it! But he will not say so. If he disparage Daudet, whom should he praise? And he must have the air of loving others besides himself. He burns incense to Goncourt and Daudet so as not to seem to adore himself only.

Wednesday, 24th June.

It seems that we shall have the cholera. It is already at Toulon. It is those infamous English, who, for money interests, make thousands of men die. If ever there was a people denuded of all sympathetic

qualities, that is one. They are wise and repellant, egotists and cowards, as history shows.

More than 8000 people have left Toulon. A good part came to Paris by this morning's train. It is very nice for Paris. It seems that in the Chamber they were so much moved that the Egyptian question troubled no one. Ah! man is interesting to study when he becomes *quite* natural in face of a question of life or death. Every one becomes primitive; and Jules Ferry will have a face like my little model, aged six years.

Do you see them, these animals in frock coats and vests, going to ask for explanations from the Minister of Marine? Do you see these herds—destined to perish some day or other—who are conscious of it, and yet agitate themselves all the same? What is the good? We all die whatever we do, as Maupassant says.

We know that we shall all die, that none will escape, and we have the courage to live under this frightful menace.

Is it not this terror of the end, when we are no more, that urges certain men to leave something behind them? Yes, those who are conscious of this inevitable end have a horror of it and wish to survive. Is not this instinct the proof that there is, or that we desire, an immortality?

Oh, to finish! to disappear! And others will come after. Did I not wish to die last year because I shall not leave a name like Michael Angelo?

6th July.

I am afraid of tiring Jules Bastien-Lepage. I do not feel that he takes pleasure in seeing me, though he is very amiable.

There are fugitive gleams—one knows not what—that put you in confidence.

And that is wanting to me. He is very much spoiled, this man, very much used to having people at his feet. What then? I also am used to an enormous value being put on my amiability. But he is such a great artist, a being altogether above others. He knows I understand and adore his painting.

I have been to find the wrestlers in company with Rosalie. It seems they do not work outside but indoors, and especially in the evening. That alters everything, for I do not want to paint in artificial light, and I should not have the interest of street types.

MAUPASSANT

THE CORRESPONDENCE WITH DE MAUPASSANT

I

"MONSIEUR—I read you almost with delight. You adore the truths of nature, and find there a really great poetry, while yet stirring us by details of sentiment so profoundly human that we recognize ourselves in them and love you with an egoistical love. That is a phrase, is it? Be indulgent; it is sincere at bottom. It is evident that I should like to say to you exquisite and striking things. But that is very difficult on the spur of the moment. I regret it the more that you are remarkable enough for one to dream quite romantically of becoming the confidante of your fine spirit, if

indeed your spirit is beautiful. If your soul is not beautiful, and if you do not express yourself in these things, I regret it, for you in the first place; then I set you down as a manufacturer of literature, and pass on. For a year I have been on the point of writing to you, but . . . several times I believed I was magnifying you, and that it was not worth the trouble. Then suddenly, two days ago, I read in the *Gaulois* that some one had honoured you with a gracious epistle, and that you desired the address of this good person, so that you might reply to her. I at once became jealous; your literary merits dazzled me afresh; and here I am.

Now, mark me well: I shall remain always unknown (for good), and I do not even wish to see you; your head might displease me, who knows? I only know that you are young and that you are not married, two essential points. But I warn you that

I am charming; this sweet thought will encourage you to reply to me. It seems to me that if I were a man I should not desire even epistolary communication with a slovenly old Englishwoman, . . . whatever might be thought by—

"Miss Hastings."

R. G. D.,
Bureau de la Madeleine.

II

Maupassant replied from Cannes:—

"MADAME—My letter assuredly will not do what you expect. I wish at the outset to thank you for your kindness toward me and your compliments. Then let us talk like reasonable people.

"You ask to be my confidante? By what right? I do not know you at all. Why should I say to you—an unknown person, whose mind, inclinations, and so on, may not accord with my intellectual temperament—what I might say verbally, in intimacy, to the women who are my friends? Would not that be the act of an imbecile, of an inconstant friend?

"What can mystery add to the charm of relationship by letters?

"Does not all the sweetness of affection

between man and woman (I mean chaste affection) come especially from the pleasure of seeing each other, of talking face to face, and of catching again in thought, as one writes to one's friend, the lines of her face floating between one's eyes and the paper?

"How can one even write those intimate things, one's inner self, to a being whose physical form, the colour of whose hair, whose smile and look, one does not know? . . .

"What interest should I have in telling to you 'I have done this, I have done that,' knowing that that will only give a picture of uninteresting things, since you do not know me at all?

"You refer to a letter that I lately received; it was from a man who asked for advice. That is all.

"I come back to the letters of unknown persons. In the last two years I have received about fifty or sixty of them. How

shall I choose among these women the confidante of my soul, as you say? When they are willing to show themselves and make acquaintance as in the world of simple bourgeois, relations of friendship and confidence can be established; if not, why neglect the charming friends one knows for a friend who may be charming, but is unknown; or who may be disagreeable, whether to our eyes or our thought? All this is not very gallant, is it? But if I threw myself at your feet, could you believe me faithful in my moral affections?

"Pardon me, madam, for these reasonings of a man more practical than poetical; and believe me, your grateful and devoted,

"GUY DE MAUPASSANT."

"Excuse the erasures in my letter. I cannot write without making them, and I have not time to recopy."

III

In reply Marie wrote:—

"Your letter, sir, does not surprise me; I should not expect what you seem to suppose. But I did not at first ask to be your confidante—that would be a little too silly; and if you have time to re-read my letter you will see that you have not deigned to note the ironical and irreverent tone that I employed. You indicate the sex of your other correspondent. I thank you for reassuring me, but, my jealousy being purely spiritual, that matters little. To answer me by confidences would be the act of a scatter-brain, seeing that you do not know me, would it? Would it abuse your sensibility, sir, to tell you unreservedly of death of Henry IV?

"To reply by confidences, since you have understood that I asked them from you by return of post, would be to ridicule me wittily, and if I had been in your place, I should have done it. I am sometimes very merry, while I am also often sad enough to dream of sharing confidences by letter with an unknown philosopher, and getting your impressions on the Carnival.

Altogether good and profoundly felt, this sketch, the two columns of which I read three times; but, in revenge, what an old story is that of the old mother who revenges herself on the Prussians. (That must have been the time when you read my letter.) As to the charm that mystery may add, all depends on one's taste. It does not amuse you. All right, but me it amuses madly. I confess it in all sincerity, as I do the infantine joy caused by your letter, such as it is. . . . Well, if that does not amuse you it is because none of your cor-

respondents has been able to interest you; that is all, and if I no more than the others have been able to strike the right note, I am too sensible to bear you a grudge. No more than sixty? I should have thought you would be more plagued. Have you replied to them all? . . . My intellectual temperament cannot suit you. You would be very hard to please. In fact, I seem to think that I know you (that is the effect novelists produce on silly little women).

Still, you must be right. As I write to you with the greatest frankness (result of the sentiment above indicated), it may be that I have the air of a sentimental young person, or even of an adventuress. That would be very vexing. Do not excuse yourself, then, for your lack of poetry, gallantry, etc. Decidedly, my letter was foolish. . . . Shall we then to my very lively regret, let the matter rest here? At least let me express the wish to prove to

you some day that I did not deserve to be treated as No. 61. As for your reasoning, it is good, but partly unjust. I pardon you for it, and the erasures, and the old woman, and the Prussians. Be happy! ! ! However, if a vague description only is necessary to draw to me the beauties of your worn-out soul, one might say, for instance: fair hair, middle height, born between the year 1812 and the year 1863.... And the moral. . . . I should have the appearance of boasting, and you would learn at once that I am from Marseilles.

"*P. S.*—Pardon me the blots and erasures, etc. But I have re-copied it already three times."

IV

"Cannes, I Rue du Redon.

"Yes, madame, a second letter! It surprises me. I feel, perhaps, a vague desire to utter impertinences. That is permissible, because I do not know you; and it is just as well I do not. I write to you because I am abominably bored.

"You reproach me for having used a threadbare theme with regard to the old woman and the Prussians. But everything is threadbare; I do nothing else; I hear nothing else; all the ideas, all the phrases, all the discussions, all the creeds are commonplace.

"Is it not one, and an extreme one and a puerile, to write to an unknown person?

"In brief, at heart I am a simpleton.

You understand me, more or less. You know what you are doing and to whom you are addressing yourself; you have been told this or that about me, good or bad; it matters little. . . . Even if you should not have met any of my relatives, who are numerous, you have read articles in the papers of mine—physical and moral portraits; in short, you amuse yourself, very sure of what you do. But I? You may be, it is true, a young and charming woman, whose hands I shall be happy one day to kiss. But you may be also an old housekeeper, nurtured on the novels of Eugene Sue. You may be a young woman of literary society, and hard and dry as a mattress. In fact, are you thin? Not too much so, eh? I should be distressed to have a thin correspondent. I distrust myself altogether with the unknown.

"I have been caught in ridiculous traps. A boarding school of young girls carried

on a correspondence with me by the pen of an assistant mistress. They passed my replies from hand to hand in class. The trick was droll, and made me laugh when I heard of it—from the mistress herself.

"Are you worldly? or sentimental? or simply romantic? or, again, merely a woman who is bored, and who wants distraction? I, see you, am not the man you seek.

"I have not a halfp'orth of poetry. I take everything with indifference, and I pass two-thirds of my time in profound boredom. I occupy the third in writing lines that I sell as dear as possible, distressing myself at being obliged to ply this abominable trade which has brought me the honour of being distinguished—morally—by you. Here are confidences—what do you say of them, madame? You must find me very unceremonious. Pardon me. It seems to me in writing to you that I am

walking in subterranean darkness with the fear of holes before my feet; and I strike my stick on the ground at hazard, to sound it.

"What perfume do you use?

"Are you a gourmande?

"What sort of an ear have you?

"The colour of your eyes?

"A musician?

"I do not ask if you are married. If you are, you will reply 'No.' If you are not you will reply 'Yes.'

"I kiss your hands, madame.

"GUY DE MAUPASSANT."

V

"You bore yourself abominably! Ah! Cruel!! It is to leave no illusion upon the motive to which I owe your honoured . . . which, by the bye, arriving at a propitious moment, charmed me. It is true that I amuse myself, but it is not true that I know you as much as that; I swear to you that I am ignorant of your colour and your size, and that, in your private capacity, I only catch a glimpse of you in the lines with which you gratify me, and still across not a little malice and posturing.

"Well, for a weighty naturalistic writer you are not stupid, and my answer would be a world if I were not burdened with self-respect. It is not necessary to let you believe that all my energy passes that way.

"We will, at the outset, settle accounts over the commonplace, if you please. It will be rather a long task, for you overwhelm me with it, do you know! You are right . . . on the whole. But Art just consists in making us swallow the commonplaces by charming us eternally, as Nature does with her eternal sun, and her olden earth, and her men built all on the same pattern and animated by pretty much the same sentiments. But . . . there are musicians who have only a few notes, and painters who have but a few colours. . . .

"However, you know it better than I do, and you wish to make me grant it. . . .

"Threadbare, indeed! The mother and the Prussians in literature, and Joan of Arc in painting! Are you quite sure that a malicious person (is it indeed that?) will not find a new and moving aspect of it?

"And these other commonplaces of your painful *metier!* You take me for a *bour-*

geoise who takes you for a poet, and you seek to enlighten me. George Sand has already boasted of writing for money, and the laborious Flaubert has whined over his extreme labours. Go to! the harm that he did himself is felt. Balzac never complained like this, and he was always enthusiastic about what he was going to do. As for Montesquieu—if I dare express myself thus—his taste for study was so lively that, if it was the source of his glory, it was also that of his happiness—as the under-mistress of your fantastic boarding-school might say.

"To sell dear is very good, for there has never been really brilliant glory without gold, as says the Jew Baahron, a contemporary of Job (fragments preserved by the learned Spitzbube of Berlin). For the rest, everything gains by being well framed—beauty, genius, and even faith. Did not God come in person to explain to His servant Moses the ornamentation of His ark,

recommending that the cherubims which were to flank it should be of gold and of exquisite workmanship? . . .

"There, in the same way you bore yourself, and you take everything with indifference, and you have not a ha'porth of poetry! If you think to frighten me! . . .

"Now I see you: you must have a very big figure, a fairly big paunch, a short waistcoat of doubtful stuff, with the last button loose. Ah, well! you interest me all the same. Only, I do not understand how you can be bored. I am myself sometimes sad, discouraged, or angry; but bored —never!

"You are not the man I seek? Misfortune! (there speaks your 'housekeeper').

"You would be very kind if you would show me how that is done. I seek no one, sir; and I think that men should only be the accessories of the strong women (the dry old girl). At last, I will reply to your

questions, and with great sincerity, for I do not like to play with the innocence of a man of genius who dozes after dinner over his cigar.

"Thin? Oh, no; but neither am I stout. Worldly, sentimental, romantic? But how do you mean? It seems to me that there is room for all that in the same individual. All depends on the moment, the occasion, the circumstances. I am an opportunist, and, above all, a victim of moral contagions; so it may happen to me to become unromantic like you.

"My perfume? That of virtue. *Vulgo*, none. A gourmande? Yes, or, rather, hard to please. My ear is small, irregular, but pretty. Eyes grey. Yes, a musician; but not as good a pianist as your undermistress should be. If I were not married, could I read your abominable books?

"Are you satisfied with my docility? If so, loose another button and think of

me as the twilight falls. If not . . . so much the worse! I find there compensation for your false confidences.

"Should I dare to ask who are your musicians and your painters?

"And what if I were a man?"

[To the above letter is appended a sketch of a stout gentleman dozing on a bench under a palm at the seaside, a table, a glass of beer, a cigar.]

VI

"*3rd April* 1884.

"MADAME—I have just spent a fortnight in Paris, and as I left in Cannes the cabalistic indications needed for my letters to reach you, I could not reply sooner.

"And then, do you know, madame, you have quite frightened me. You quote, one on top of another, without warning me, G. Sand, Flaubert, Balzac, Montesquieu, the Jew Baahron, Job, the savant Spitzbube of Berlin, and Moses.

"Oh, now I know you, my nice mummer! You are a professor of the sixth in the Louis-le-Grand College. I confess that I rather suspected it, your paper having a vague odour of snuff. Then I am going to cease to be gallant (was I so?) and I am

going to treat you as of the University, that is, as an enemy. Ah, sly old man, old usher, old grubber at Latin, yo uwanted to pass yourself off for a pretty woman! And you sent me your essays, a manuscript dealing with Art and Nature, to present it to some magazine, and to speak of it in some article!

"What luck that I had not given you notice of my visit to Paris. I should have seen you come in, one morning—a shabby old man who would have put his hat on the ground in order to pull out of his pocket a roll of paper tied up with a string. And he would have said to me, 'Monsieur, I am the lady who . . .'

"Ah, well, Sir Professor, I am, nevertheless, going to answer some of your questions. I begin by thanking you for the pleasant details that you give me of your physique and your tastes. I thank you equally for the portrait that you have

drawn of myself. It is a likeness, my faith! I notice some errors, however.

"1°. Less paunch.

"2°. I never smoke.

"3°. I drink neither beer, nor wine, nor alcohol. Nothing but water.

"Then the beatitude before the 'bock' is not exactly my favourite posture. I more often squat in Eastern fashion on a divan.

"You ask me who is my painter. Among the moderns, Millet. My musicians? I have a horror of music.

"In truth, I prefer a pretty woman to all the arts. I put a good dinner, a real dinner, the rare dinner, almost in the same rank with a pretty woman. There is my profession of faith, my dear old professor! I think that when one has a good passion, a capital passion, one must give it full swing, must sacrifice all the others to it. That is what I do. I had two passions. It was necessary to sacrifice one—I have to

some extent sacrificed gluttony. I have become as sober as a camel, but nice in no longer knowing what to eat.

"Do you want yet another detail? I have the passion for violent exercise. I have won big stakes as a rower, a swimmer, and a walker.

"Now that I have given you all these confidences, Sir Usher, tell me of yourself, of your wife since you are married, of your children. Have you a daughter? If so, think of me, I beseech you.

"I pray the divine Homer to ask for you, from the God whom you adore, all the blessings of the earth.

"GUY DE MAUPASSANT."

VII

Mdlle. Bashkirtseff's answer was signed "Savantin, Joseph."

"Unhappy Zolist! this is delicious. If Heaven were just, you would share my opinion. It seems to me that not only is it very amusing, but that there might be in it delicate enjoyment, really interesting things, if only one were absolutely sincere. For, indeed, where is the friend, man or woman, with whom there is not some reserve to make, some discretion to maintain? While with abstract beings——

"Not to be of any country, of any world, to be true! One would reach the largeness of expression of Shakespeare. . . .

"But enough of mystification like that. Since you know all, I will no longer hide

anything from you. Yes, sir, I have the honour to be a schoolmaster, as you say; and I am going to prove it to you by eight pages of admonitions. Too sly to bring MSS. with ostensible string, I will make you relish my teaching in little doses.

"I have profited, sir, by the leisure of Holy Week to re-read your complete works. You are a gay dog, incontestably. I had never read you *en bloc* and right off. The impression is, therefore, almost fresh, and that impression. . . . It is enough to turn all my pupils inside out and to upset all the convents of Christendom.

As for myself, who am not at all bashful, I am confounded—yes, sir, confounded—by this intense preoccupation of yours with the sentiment that M. Alexandre Dumas fils names Love. It will become a monomania, and that would be regrettable, for you are richly dowered, and your peasant tales are well sketched. I know that



MARIE BASHKIRTSEFF'S STUDIO—ANOTHER VIEW

you have done *Une Vie*, and that this book is stamped with a great feeling of disgust, sadness, and discouragement. This feeling, which leads one to pardon the other things, appeared from time to time in your writings, and leads people to be-

[1] The following sentences from Vernon Lee's *Baldwin* are opposite: "I am sorry that this Dorothy should have been reading *Une Vie*," said Marcel; "the book is perhaps the finest novel that any of our younger Frenchmen have produced. But I shrink from the thought of the impression which it must have made upon this young girl, so frank and fearless, but at the same time so pure and sensitive." "I have no doubt that my cousin felt very sick after reading it," said Baldwin, coldly; ". . . but what I feel sorry about is not that an English girl should read the book, but that a Frenchman, or rather the majority of the French people, could write it. . . . I said that the English novel is pernicious because it permits people, or rather let us say women, to live on in the midst of a partial and therefore falsified notion of life. I objected that a novel like Maupassant's gave a false impression of life because it presented as a literary work—that is to say, as something which we instinctively accept as a generalisation, as a lesson—what is in truth a mere accidental, exceptional heaping up of revolting facts; . . . and still more because it dragged the imagination over physical details with which the imagination has no legitimate connection, which can only enervate, soil, and corrupt it."

lieve that you are a superior being who suffers from life. It is this that cuts me to the heart. But this whining is, I fear, only an echo of Flaubert.

"In fact, we are brave simpletons, and you are a good *farceur* (do you see the advantage of not knowing one another?) with your solitude and your beings with long hair. . . . Love—it is still with that word that one gets hold of the whole world. Oh, la! la! Gil Blas, where art thou? It was after reading one of your articles that I read the *Attaqua du Moulin.* It was like entering a magnificent and fragrant forest where birds sang. 'Never did larger peace fall upon a happier spot.' This masterly phrase recalls the few famous measures in the last act of the *Africaine.*

"But you abhor music. Is it possible? They have deceived you with learned music. Happily your book is not yet

done, the book in which there will be a woman—yes, sir, a *character*, and no violent exercises. Coming in first in a race, you are but the equal of a horse, and, however noble that animal may be, it is still an animal, young man. Permit an old Latinist to recommend the passage to you in which Sallust says: *Omnes homines qui sese student praestari*, etc. I shall set it also to my daughter Anastasie to work at. One does not know, perhaps you will reform——

"The table, women! But, young friend, take care. This leads to doubtful talk, and my character of schoolmaster forbids me to follow you on to such dangerous ground.

"No music, no tobacco? The devil!

Millet is good, but you say Millet as the *bourgeois* says Rafael. I advise you to look at a young modern called Bastien-Lepage. Go to Rue de Sèze.

What age are you, really? Do you seriously pretend that you prefer pretty women to all the arts? You are chaffing me.

"Pardon the incoherence of this fragment, and do not leave me long without a letter.

"Here, great devourer of women, I wish you—and am, in holy terror, your obedient servant,

"SAVANTIN JOSEPH."

VIII

"83 Rue Dulong.

"My dear Joseph—The moral of your letter is this, is it not?—since we do not know each other at all, let us not stand upon ceremony, but speak freely to one another face to face, like two gossips.

"So I am even going to give you an example of complete *abandon*. At the point at which we are, we can chat with each other nicely, can we not? Then I talk to you, and if you are not satisfied, chut! Address Victor Hugo and he will call you 'Dear Poet.' Do you know that, for an usher, to whom are intrusted young innocents, you tell me rather stiff things? What, you are not bashful at all? Neither in your lectures, nor in your writings, nor

in your words, nor in your actions? *Hein!* I am doubtful about it.

"And you believe that something amuses me! And that I make game of the public! My poor Joseph, there is not under the sun a man more bored than I. Nothing appears to me worth the trouble of an effort or the fatigue of a movement. I bore myself ceaselessly, without rest and without hope, because I desire nothing, I expect nothing—so far from weeping over things I cannot alter—or expect only from them that I shall be helplessly imbecile. So, since we are frank with one another, I warn you that this is my last letter, for I begin to have enough of it.

"Why should I continue to write to you? It does not amuse me; it cannot give me any pleasure in the future.

"I have no wish to know you. I am sure you are ugly; and I find I have sent you enough autographs as it is. Do you

know they are worth ten to twenty *sous* apiece, according to the contents? You would have at least two worth twenty *sous*. . . .

"And again, I really think that I shall once more leave Paris. I am decidedly duller there than elsewhere. I shall go to Etretat for a change, seizing the moment when I can be alone there.

"I like to be alone immoderately. Then, at least I am bored without speaking.

"You ask my exact age. Being born on the 5th of August 1850, I am not yet thirty-four years old. Are you satisfied? Are you going to beg my photograph now? I warn you I shall not send it you.

"Yes, I like pretty women; but there are days when I am utterly disgusted with them.

"Adieu, my old Joseph. Our acquaintance will have been very incomplete, very short. What would you have? It is per-

haps better that we do not know each other's phiz.

"Give me thy hand that I may shake it cordially in sending a last remembrance.

"GUY DE MAUPASSANT."

"Thou canst now give serious information about me to those who ask for it. Thanks to the mystery, I am delivered. Adieu, Joseph!"

IX

"Your letter is too good. There was no need of so much perfume that I might be stifled by it. So this is what you found to reply to a woman culpable at most of imprudence! Pretty!

"Doubtless Joseph was all wrong; it is just for that reason he is so vexed. But he had his head full of all the . . . levities of your books, like a refrain that one cannot get rid of. However, I blame him severely, for one must be sure of the courtesy of one's adversary before risking pleasantries like his.

"Nevertheless, you could, I think, have humbled him with more wit.

"Now I am going to tell you an incredible thing, one that you will never believe, and that, coming too late, has only an his-

torical value. Ah well, it is that I, I also have had enough of it. At your fifth letter I was chilled. . . . Satiety? . . .

"However, I only cling to that which escapes me. I must then hold you now? Almost.

"Why did I write to you? One wakes up one fine morning to find that one is a rare being surrounded by imbeciles, and groans to see so many pearls thrown to so many swine.

"If I had written to a celebrated man, one worthy of understanding me? It would be charming, romantic; and who knows but, after a number of letters, this might be a friend, won in unusual circumstances. Then one asks oneself, Who? And the choice falls on you.

"Such correspondence is possible only on two conditions. The first is *boundless* admiration on the part of the unknown. From boundless admiration is born a cur-

rent of sympathy which makes her say things that infallibly touch and interest the celebrated man.

"None of these conditions exist. I chose you with the hope of admiring you boundlessly later on! For, as I thought, you were very young, comparatively.

"I wrote you therefore coolly, and I have ended by telling you some unbecoming and even discourteous things, while I admit that you have vouchsafed to notice them. At the point where we are, as you say, I may confess that your infamous letter has made me pass a very bad day.

"I am ruffled as though the offence were real. It is absurd.

"Adieu, with pleasure.

"If you have them still, return me my autographs; as for yours, I have already sold them in America at an insane price."

X.

"Etretat, *22nd April.*

"MADAME—So I have deeply wounded you. Do not deny it. I am charmed at it, and I beg your pardon for it very humbly.

"I asked myself, Who is she? She wrote me at the outset a sentimental letter, the letter of a dreamer, an enthusiast. It is a pose common among girls; is she a girl? Many *inconnues* are girls.

"Then, madame, I replied in a sceptical tone. You were quicker than I and the letter before your last contained singular things. I no longer knew at all what sort of person you could be. I kept saying to myself all the time: Is it a masked woman who is amusing herself, or a simple joker?

"You know the regular way to recognise women of the world at the Opera

ball? One pinches them. The girls are used to that, and simply say, 'Stop it.' The others get angry. I pinched you in a very improper way, I confess, and you are angry. Now I beg your pardon, all the more since a phrase in your letter has given me much pain. You say that my *infamous* reply (it is not 'infamous' that has touched me) has made you pass a bad day.

"Madame, I leave you to seek for the subtle reasons which have afflicted me so much at the thought of having given a woman I did not know an unhappy day. Pray believe, madame, that I am neither so brutal nor so sceptical nor so improper as I have appeared to you to be. But in spite of myself I have a great distrust of all mystery, of the unknown and of unknown people.

"How do you think I could say a sincere thing to the person X . . . who writes to

me anonymously, who may be an enemy (I have them), or a simple joker? I mask myself among masked people. It is straight fighting. I have, however, come to see a bit of your character by stratagem.

"Again, pardon!

"I kiss the unknown hand that writes to me.

"Your letters, madame, are at your disposal, but I shall only deliver them into your hands. Ah, I would make the trip to Paris for that purpose.

"GUY DE MAUPASSANT."

XI.

"In writing to you again I am ruining myself for ever in your eyes. But that is all the same to me, and I shall revenge myself. Oh! only by telling you the effect produced by your ruse to discover my character.

"I was positively afraid of sending to the post-office, imagining all kinds of things. *That man* will close the correspondence by . . . I spare your modesty. In opening the envelope I waited so as not to be moved. All the same I was moved, but pleasantly.

> "Before the soft accents of a noble repentance,
> Must I then, noble sir, cease to dislike you?

"Unless this should be another ruse: 'Flattered at being taken for a woman of the world, she will act the part for me,

after having called forth a human document. which I am very glad to illustrate like that.'

"Then because I am angry? This is not perhaps a conclusive proof, my dear sir!

"Then adieu! I want to pardon you, if you wish it, for I am ill, and as that is not usual, I am full of pity for myself, for every one, for you, who have managed to be so very disagreeable to me. I deny it so much the less that you may think just what you like about it.

"How to prove to you that I am neither a joker nor an enemy? And what's the good? Impossible any longer to swear to you that we were made to understand each other. You are not on a par with me. I regret it. Nothing would have been more agreeable to me than to recognise in you all superiority—in you or in another.

"To pluck a crow with you: your last article was interesting, and I should even

like, on the subject of the girl, to put a question to you. But . . .

"A very delicate little trifle in your letter has set me dreaming. You are troubled at having given me pain. That is silly or charming—I think charming. You may laugh at me; what do I care for it? Yes, you had there an attack of romanticism like Stendhal, quite plainly; but be easy, you will not die of it this time.

"Good evening! I understand your suspicions. It is unlikely that a fashionable, young, and pretty woman would amuse herself by writing to you? Is it that? But, monsieur, how . . . Come, come, I am forgetting that all is over between us."

XII.

"83 Rue Dulong.

"MADAME—I have just been spending a fortnight at the seaside, that is why I have not replied sooner. Now I have returned to Paris for several weeks before going away for the summer.

"Decidedly, madame, you are not pleased, and you tell me, so as to show your irritation, that I am very much inferior to you. Oh, madame, if you knew me, you would, know that I have no pretensions in the way of moral worth, or of artistic worth. In fact, I laugh at the one as at the other.

Everything is much alike to me in life —men, women, and events. There is my true profession of faith, and I may add, what you will not believe, that I rely no

more on myself than on others. Everything may be divided into boredom, farce, and misery.

"You say that you ruin yourself for ever, in my opinion, by writing again. Why so? You had the rare sense to confess that you were wounded by my letter, to confess it in an irritated, simple, fresh, and charming way that touched and moved me. I have made my excuses in telling you my reasons. You have again replied very prettily without disarming, showing kindness a little mixed still with anger. What more natural?

"Oh, I know well that I shall inspire you now with utter distrust. So much the worse; you will not then want us to meet. One knows more things about any one in hearing him speak for five minutes than in writing for ten years. How comes it that you do not know any of the people I know, for when I am in Paris I go into

Society every evening? You might tell me to go on such a day to such a house. I would go. If I appeared to you very disagreeable you would not make yourself known.

"But be under no illusion as to my person. I am neither handsome, nor elegant, nor singular. That, however, should be all the same to you. Do you go into Orleanist, Bonapartist, or Republican circles? I know all three. Will you make me take up my position in a museum, a church, or a street? In that case I should put conditions so as to be sure I did not await a woman who did not come. What do you say to an evening at the theatre, without your making yourself known, if you like? I would tell you the number of my box, where I should be with friends. You would not tell me that of yours. And you could write to me on the morrow, 'Adieu, Monsieur!'

"Am I not more magnanimous than the French Guards at Fontenoy?

"I kiss your hands, Madame,

"MAUPASSANT."

THE END.

